

# THE OLDTIMER

Volume 35, Number 2

Newsletter of the Josephine County Historical Society

March 2000

## We have a date

### MARCH

■ **All month.** A fund-raiser will increase the Society's operating budget. You "eat" to participate. See page 7.

### MAY

■ **JCHS 40th anniversary!** We will celebrate 40 years of preserving, promoting and interpreting the county's history. Drop by.

### EVERY MONTH

■ **A walk through time.** Mollie Means is at the Schmidt House daily. Organizations may enjoy a change in their regular meetings by having the whole group visit the museum together. Call Mollie at the Society or at her home, 479-2330, to schedule a tour.

■ **Window to history.** Stop by both display windows at Evergreen Federal Bank, located in downtown Grants Pass at 969 S.E. Sixth St., to enjoy the changing exhibits. They can be from the Society's collections or from private, individual collections. Call Jan Collins if you have a collection to show. She volunteers at the Research Library on Tuesdays.

■ **Mondays Make History.** Remember to read the box published along with the article in the Daily Courier for events not listed here.

For information on any of these events, call 479-7827.



Living History Players bring to life the Schmidt House, located in Grants Pass.

## Family's social nature echoes in modern Schmidt House activities

*By Darlene Leach*

As solid and sturdy as the German immigrant who built it is the Schmidt House at the corner of Fifth and J streets. The generous bequest of Anna and Flora ensures that the house will continue to be a commanding presence and endure as a keeper of the Schmidt memory.

A century ago, a lush rose garden and the fragrance of honeysuckle blossoms framing the front porch sent welcome signals to neighbors, who often gathered there with the Schmidt family.

The house began in 1900 as a small, one-story, brick, four-room structure.

By 1911, the house had been redesigned in the craftsman style and a brown-shingled second story was added. This provided more space to meet the family's growing needs and reflected Claus Schmidt's increasing prosperity.

Inside the house is a fabulous treasure trove of furnishings, "old fashioned" implements and utensils, clothing and memorabilia

that mirror life in that bygone era. There are washboards, boilers and a wood cookstove that show everyday tasks were time-consuming and labor intensive. Each room holds even more fascinations. Impressive are the wood moldings, cupboards and furniture

Events coordinator raises money to preserve properties. See page 6.

See HOUSE, page 7



# Letters to the editor

Dear Rose:

Please accept this small token of our appreciation for allowing us to display our things at the Schmidt House for October's National Tole Month. We really enjoyed the experience, especially First Friday.

Thanks for all of your time and help. We are looking forward to repeating the experience this year in October.

**Barbara Stuckley**  
**Siskiyou Decorative Artists**

## Josephine County Historical Society:

We'd like to make this donation in memory of Tommy Thompson. He was a great friend of our family, and of the whole town of Grants Pass. How everyone will miss those "Letters to the Editor" and clever cartoons! He was interested in everything going on in and around the town, and saw it all with a gentle humor.

This family surely misses him.

**Steve and Louise Martin and sons,**  
**Ken Martin**  
**Chris Martin**

Dear Mr. Oaks:

Please find a check for one year membership. Please advise me of the procedure to request the information on my uncle, Herbert Dean Hassen. Thank you for your patience and assistance.

**Trina Hassen**

Dear Mr. Oaks:

It was, indeed, good news to learn that the ABC Cabin is still standing and that you will be able to send me some pictures of it.

I may have mentioned that the name was derived from the first names of the three of us who built it, Austin, Brian, Clarence (Austin Hamer, Brian Flavel, Clarence Slayton).

You mentioned that the cabin is currently known as the "Porter cabin." That is unfortunate, and I hope that we can persuade the Forest Service to restore the name to the "ABC Cabin" as it should be.

**Austin F. Hamer**

Dear Board Members:

I noticed a plant in your garden called Scotch broom (*Cytisus scoparius*). This plant is a non-native invasive weed and considered a noxious weed in California, Oregon, Washington.

I would hope the Historical Society would remove this weed as to not promote its cultivation in other gardens. People come to you to see the past — Scotch broom was a mistake from the past that cost millions a year to control.

Scotch broom can produce 60 seeds in its second year and a mature plant, 5,000 to 10,000 seeds. The plant can live 10 to 15 years. Seeds remain viable up to 80 years and have a hard coating that can survive transport in river gravel.

**Mark Allen Moser**

**Editor's note: The board voted to remove Scotch broom after hearing this letter.**

*Interested in preserving history?*

**Attend a board meeting.**

**First Tuesday of the month, 7 p.m., at the Historical Society.**

## THE OLDTIMER

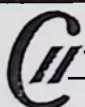
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**Annual dues are \$15 and include a subscription.**

**Patricia Snyder, editor**

The quarterly circulation is 650.  
The publishing committee also produces an annual historical publication, mailed free to all members of the society.

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# From the Book Shop

*By Janet Lane*

Here are some great titles (and great bargains, too) from the Society's bookstore, located on the corner of Fifth and K streets.

Out-of-town members can order by mail. Add \$3 for postage and handling and make check out to JCHS, 512 S.W. Fifth St., Grants Pass, OR 97526.

## DISCOUNTED SPECIALS

**"Brewed in the Pacific Northwest: A History of Beer Making in Oregon and Washington,"** by Gary and Gloria Meier. Discount price \$11.

For every beer lover. This book, filled with rare photos, ads and labels, is an informative and lively account of brewmasters and their products from early day pioneers to today's microbreweries.

**"Mammals of the Pacific Northwest: a Pictorial Introduction"** by James R. Christensen and Earl J. Larrison. Discount price \$8.50.

This beautifully illustrated book depicts 37 groups of mammals from opossums, shrews, moles, and bats to pronghorns, bears, and voles. Detailed information as to their habitat and habits makes this a good reference book for animal lovers.

**"Heartwood"** by Rick Steber, illustrated by Don Gray. Discount price \$13.50.

A remarkable autographed book, winner of the Benjamin Franklin Award for Excellence, this volume is sure to strike a responsive chord to all who love the West. As a tree gains strength from its heartwood, so the emerging West has grown from the strength of character shown by the people who live here. Steber has captured this strength in interviews with many pioneers who represent the spirit of the West.



969 SE Sixth St., Grants Pass 541/479-3351

**"Historic Highway Bridges of Oregon"** by Dwight A. Smith, James B. Norman and Pieter T. Dykman. Discount price \$17.

More than 200 Oregon bridges are illustrated with photos and schematics in this volume. Conde B. McCullough-designed coastal arch bridges (including our Caveman Bridge) are elegant and unique and make him Oregon's most outstanding bridge engineer.

First published by the Oregon Department of Transportation in 1985, the book proved so popular it was soon out of print. This edition was printed by the Oregon Historical Society.

## NEW IN THE BOOK SHOP

We have an outstanding new series of paperbacks, "Life in the Old West," which were written by Bobbie Kalman for children but with such wonderful photos and illustrations, they will excite and inform adults as well. \$7.95 each. The series includes: "The Wagon Train," "Life on the Ranch," "Life on the Trail," "Bandannas, Chaps, and Ten-gallon Hats," "Who Settled the West?," "Homes of the West," "The Railroad," "Life of a Miner," "Boomtowns of the West," and "The Gold Rush."

## Share Evergreen photos and memories

Evergreen Federal Bank has sponsored wonderful community events, but no one seems to have taken any photos. Now, they plan to remodel the lobby and include history. Did you attend an event and take photos? Do you have memories connected to doing business? Have you been involved in their community services and would like to share your appreciation. Drop by the Research Library with your photos and written memories, and we will forward them. Evergreen has sponsored our Mondays Make History series in the Grants Pass Daily Courier since 1992.

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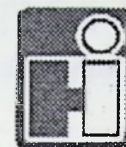
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## **History at the center**

# **Women hold strong influence on history**

March is Women's History Month, a time to note the strong contributions of the less-written-about gender.

Recognizing the historical impact of women challenges those researching the past because a large part of the body of writings are by and about men. One of the area's strong female influences, Edna May Hill, provided some insight with her Historical Highlights, available in the Society's research library.

Women's equal rights were set in the form of the Donation Law. It recognized that a married woman in her own right had equal rights with men to own property.

Designed to promote settlement, the 1850 law allowed a man's wife to receive 320 acres, the same amount as her husband. The law is believed to have boosted population. In 1849, an estimated 9,000 people lived in Oregon, and 1850 estimates of residents south of the Columbia River place it at 12,000.

The only Oregon county to be named after a woman, Josephine County owes its name to the thirst for gold. Josephine Rollins, the daughter of a miner, is supposed to have been the first white woman to live in the area. Her father discovered gold in 1851 in Josephine Creek, located

in the Illinois Valley.

Many of the early services and amenities can be traced to the hard work of women in Grants Pass during the late 1800s and early 1900s.

Maude Barnes became the first librarian and Ethel Bocock the first assistant when the library opened to borrowers Jan. 19, 1914, on the second floor of city hall.

The area's first hospital came under the direction of Superintendent Mary E. Webb, who came from Portland's Good Samaritan Hospital.

Southern Oregon General was located temporarily on Front Street, what is now the Owl Club. The hospital included an operating room and enough space for 12 patients. The nurses training department came under the supervision of a number of women managers.

In 1908, the Ladies Auxiliary of the Commercial Club made a plan to hold a rose and flower festival in the city and use the money to beautify the Railroad Park grounds.

Having traveled by mule to Waldo, where her husband owned a ranch, Lucinda Ganiard became known for her building efforts in the area after her husband died.

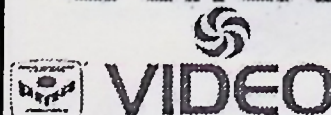
See WOMEN, page 5



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W.A. (AL) TILLERY

## Women from page 4

She owned a 400-acre ranch and constructed seven buildings downtown, including a two-story brick building.

Sadie Clevenger, who owned a hat shop, became the first president of the Women's Club in 1908.

Alice M. Bacon became the first woman superintendent of county schools in 1916 and held the position for 20 years.

The first licensed woman chauffeur in Grants Pass, Opal Gentner was known for fast driving in her Oriental buckboard.

After Daisy Helmer's husband died in 1924, she took over his furniture business. She became the first woman to speak over KUIN radio when it started in 1939, doing her own advertisements each week.

During World War II, Esther Bristol became the first female city editor for the Grants Pass Daily Courier, beloved for her weekly columns to the soldiers.

Recognition of women continues today. The county recently named a remodeled auditorium after Anne G. Basker, first female commissioner. She was elected in 1972.

## Pioneer refused to back down

*By Jean Boling*

In 1853 the Rogue Indian War started, and Caroline and Hiram Niday sought safety at Fort Vannoy. During a lull in the fighting, Hiram filed a donation land claim between Jump Off Joe Creek and Grave Creek. The following spring, Hiram died, leaving Carrie with an 8-day-old infant and an adopted orphan boy.

In October, the Indians rose again, attacking the Harris and Haines places, then moving on toward Nidays. Carrie saw the fire and, calling her hired men, was preparing to defend the homestead when four men rode up. The leader had his men carry the children to Fort Leland and Carrie rode a racehorse, traveling bareback when the cinch broke.

After moving to a couple different forts, the Indians attacked Fort Levins almost as soon as her party arrived. The fort was defended by only 12 men, and one became so frightened he could not shoot. Carrie took his rifle and helped defend the fort. During the night, her infant daughter Mary became ill and died in the room her mother was defending. An arriving company drove off the Indians.

After waiting out the war at Fort Elliff, Carrie returned to the homestead in 1856. The buildings were burned, the stock dead or gone, but she dug in her heels and started over.

She married David Sexton in 1857, living on the claim that eventually gave Mount Sexton its name. Because she signed a "Declaration of Women's Rights" prior to her marriage, the Niday claim belonged to her. She lived on a farm at the foot of Mount Sexton until her death in 1911.

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# Events coordinator helps cover costs

In an effort to offset the costs of maintaining property and preserving significant items, the Historical Society has selected an events coordinator, Mollie Means, to schedule rental of the property and manage activities.

Mollie can be reached at the Society by calling 479-7827 or 479-2330.

## Schmidt House Museum

Built in 1898 with three additions, the last in 1910, the house at the corner of Fifth and J streets features furniture from the early 1900s, vintage clothing from the 1850s through 1960s and a variety of displays. The house was built in the European style with bricks from a Grants Pass yard.

Tours by costumed guides are available Tuesday through Friday or by appointment. The house is available for rent for activities such as a murder-mystery party or a wedding. An historical garden adds atmosphere for events such as weddings, ice cream socials and reunions.

## Barn meeting room

Converted barn with heat and electricity is available for rent for meetings, potlucks and showers.

## History players

Volunteers don costumes and recreate life in the early years of the county. Characters such as William Hayes (Hayes Hill) and Caroline Sexton (read about her on page 5) visit nursing homes, clubs, retirement centers, schools and other sites on a donation basis.

## Regular activities

Mollie is also the person to call to find out about Historical Society activities, such as shows at the Barnstormer Theatre, pie and ice cream socials and cemetery tours.

# From the Collection



*Kewpie dolls are included among the collection left to us by Elsie Street. The children's room at the Schmidt House features a doll display. Kewpie dolls were first designed in 1909 by Rose O'Neill to illustrate a Woman's Home Companion article.*

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## LEAVE A LEGACY

Part of a series about Leave a Legacy, promoted by the National Committee on Planned Giving, this issue's question talks about the goal. The goal is simple: an on-going campaign to help educate people to the importance of making a charitable donation to a non-profit organization. Over 135 communities across the country and Canada participate. In Oregon, a statewide effort this year includes workshops, seminars, press and media information, a speakers' bureau and testimonials on the impact of legacies on non-profit organizations. While the Leave a Legacy program concentrates on gifts through a Will, many prefer to give to a non-profit during their lifetime. Many members add an extra amount when they renew their memberships. Their names are listed on page 8, In Tribute Of. Legacies include the Schmidt House, the Espy timberland, the Heston estate, the Roberts House and Memorial legacies.



## HOUSE continued from page 1

made by Claus, a skilled woodworker. There is the playroom with the antique Revolutionary and Civil War toy soldiers that Herman and Reinhold played with. In the hall hang the children's framed school diplomas, signed by school Superintendent Lincoln Savage. A storage room that has been converted into a mini-museum displays the Schmidt country store memorabilia. A former downstairs bedroom houses Col. Heston's military and personal effects and his Oriental art and furniture collection. These are just a few of the treasures.

Outside, the garden has its own stories to tell about the trees and plants that survived and those that did not. The magnificent oak tree was there before the house was built and still gives shelter from the summer sun and in winter, leafless and stark, stands guard. A mountain ash and a majestic maple stand near, one of the two original persimmon trees is left and still bears succulent fruit. Other surviving plants include rose and camellia bushes, Old English lavender. The garden remains alive and well, thanks to Zodiac gardeners Nancy and Ray Campbell.

The last stop at the back of the yard is the barn where Bob, the grocery's delivery horse, was stabled and where hay and feed sold at the store was kept.

Let's hope this cursory profile will be a reminder that just as the Schmidts loved company, so does the House welcome visitors.

## From the Board

### Phase II of the library begins

Thanks to a generous donation from Jim Basker, the upstairs of the research library is beginning to take shape. Bob Lane and Tom Bristol have been busy putting up drywall and studs and would appreciate some help from members who are handy with tools or can help with this work in any way. We would also appreciate donations to fund the heating/air conditioning unit that will be needed for this second-floor space. This area will be used to store collections given to the Society to preserve, such as ledgers, record books and photo albums belonging to many Josephine County organizations that have made contributions to local heritage. Mark contributions "Collections Care."

### Debt payment continues

Our mortgage debt has been paid down to \$19,455 thanks to member response to our drive last year. Along with a second generous donation from Amy Hendrickson at Christmastime, Joan Momsen, Tom and Pat Bristol, Bob and Jan Lane, Judy Boling, Dawne Fox and Frank Sprinkle continue to help pay down the debt in the year 2000. Mark contributions "P-O-D," and they will be applied to the mortgage bill.

### Welcome tours available

Mel Shaw, new membership chairman, wants to welcome members with a quarterly tour of the Society's facilities. One is planned about the same time as this newsletter goes out. Mel will contact new members, but if you have been with us some time and have never visited the house museum, barn meeting place or library and would like to join a tour, call 476-6113.

### Comfort friends

Anyone knowing of a fellow member who has taken ill or suffered a loss can call Grace Blanchard, 476-2130.

### Spiffy the grounds

Local workers lunch at the Schmidt House garden, and Properties Director Nancy Campbell is looking for donations of benches, tables and umbrellas. She'd also like some bricks, stepping stones and rocks. Call 474-4658.

### Help raise funds by eating pizza

We are participating in a new fund-raising program at Papa Murphy's. Buy a Peel-a-Deal card from us for \$5. You get eight great coupon offers for pizza, and we get to make a profit. Mail checks to: JCHS, 512 S.W. Fifth St., Grants Pass 97526.

Yes, I want \_\_\_\_\_ Peel-a-Deal cards at \$5 each.

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*Special thanks to Amy L.  
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donations two years in a row.*

## FOR BUILDING FUND:

James Basker

○ ○ ○

The Josephine County Historical Society receives no tax-based funding. Preservation of history depends on membership dues, fund-raising events, publication sales, and donations. If you wish to contribute, send your donation to:

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